

IN THE UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
NON-PROVISIONAL PATENT APPLICATION

INVENTOR: AARON KISS

"SAIL AND METHOD OF MANUFACTURE THEREOF"

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CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of co-pending U.S. Patent Application Serial No. 09/834,986 and hereby claims priority upon such co-pending application under 35 U.S.C. § 120.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

This invention relates to aerodynamic lift devices and, more particularly, to sailboat sails adapted to bear printed informational content.

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2. Description of the Background Art

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Industrious marketers routinely look for innovative ways to convey information, particularly information in the form of advertisements. Traditional forms of advertisement, i.e. print advertisement in periodical publications and television and radio advertising, flourish in the electronic age. With the advent of the Internet, advertisers have found an additional means of advertising, instantaneously, on a worldwide basis.

However, the advent of the electronic age has not ended the romance and relaxation associated with vacationing and/or leisuring near bodies of water. A significant portion of the population of humans on this planet repose at some time or another in their lives near lake and sea

shores. For many of these vacationers and local residents alike, such time spent, whether brief or long-lasting, is accompanied by an overwhelming sense of awareness and relaxation of the surroundings, yielding one of the most significant opportunities for advertisers to ingratiate their messages and information into the memories of those near the water.

5 Unfortunately, the ability and right to physically place informational messages, e.g. advertisements, before vacationers and local residents near the water is severely limited by environmental factors and laws which limit or completely prohibit advertising structures such as billboards and other signs. Since those recreating near the water inevitably face the water, any land-based structures are for the most part directly behind beachgoers and therefore only seen for a small
10 amount of time.

 The use of banner planes, which fly translucent or transparent banners bearing messages which can only be read on one side, only provide limited exposure due to the fact that they are typically required to fly some distance offshore and fly at speeds in excess of 100 or more miles per hour. As a result, the banners are only in front of the eyes of each particular viewer for a brief time.

15 Therefore, a conveniently deployed information dissemination system is needed which does not require the construction of a permanent fixture in the water and which can be selectively maintained essentially in fixed position or moved very slowly before areas on the shore which happen to have the highest concentration of people at a given time.

20 SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

 It is, therefore, a principal object of this invention to provide an advertising system which exposes informational messages to virtually any land area near a lake or seashore.

 It is also an object of this invention to provide a novel sailboat sail on which can be imprinted

photorealistic informational content using an extremely inexpensive sail material and widely-used printing technique.

These and other objects are accomplished through the use of a sailboat flying one or more sails, which sails have imprinted thereon informational content, such as consumer advertising. The sail material is chosen from a group of materials which lay completely flat, i.e. planar, when laid against a planar surface, but which stretch under wind loading when attached to a sailboat to form the conventional airfoil shape desirable of a sail. By choosing sail material which stretches between a completely flat, planar, orientation when not exposed to aerodynamic forces, conventional printing techniques can be utilized to print the information thereupon. With the advent of large printing apparatuses which can produce very large, photorealistic, imagery, such as product photographs and logos, the process of printing upon the sail material is greatly simplified. Attempts to print, paint, etc. such images upon sails having "draft", that is, sails which have more linear feet of sail material between the luff and the leech than the actual distance between the luff and the leech, have invariably resulted in distorted images as the draft of the sail opens up under wind loading. Any attempt whatsoever to compensate for such distortion during the printing process would be extremely complex and, consequently, cost-prohibitive.

Certainly the most desirable sail on a sailboat to portray informational content upon is the jib.

However, the larger the draft of the jib made out of prior art material, the more difficult it is to print upon due to the amount of sagging in the sail material in its flaccid state. The same is true for any sail, e.g. mainsail, inner staysail, etc.

To overcome these disadvantages, a combination sail and information content conveying

medium is proposed. In the preferred embodiment, the sail material is a laminated banner opaque vinyl having polyester yarn scrim, preferably in a cross-hatched orientation, but other orientations will work just as well. When the sail material is laid flat upon a horizontal planar surface, it can be printed upon with ease. Since some sails are larger than existing printers can accommodate due to the flattened nature of the material, plural sheets can be printed upon and combined, such as by stitching or pressurized heat seaming, or otherwise combined, along edges of the sheets so as to cover the entire sail. In use, due to the elastic nature of the material, a "draft" is created in the sail by aerodynamic forces causing the sail to assume an airfoil shape which drives the vessel through the water in the same manner as occurs when a conventional sail is used. Batten pockets covered with the artwork corresponding to those sections of the sail where batten pockets are desired may be applied, again by stitching, heat seaming or the like.

The use of a material chosen from the group of materials disclosed herein has exhibited the surprising result of performance comparable to standard Mylar[®], Kevlar, etc. sails, but upon which can be printed or otherwise imparted amazingly photorealistically detailed images of products and/or other informational content which is visible literally for miles on a relatively slow moving vessel. As a result, the number and duration of advertising impressions among beachgoers is far greater than any other advertising medium ever used before.

There is also disclosed herein a novel method for manufacturing such a sail. The method is comprised of the following steps:

(a) providing a flat sheet of stretchable material having a denier, grab tensile strength (stretch factor) and tongue tear (point of failure after puncture) sufficient to suitably hold together

and function as a sail under normal near-shore sailing conditions;

(b) printing on one or both sides of the flat sheet information content to be displayed while the sail is mounted upon a sailboat;

(c) cutting the flat sheet into the shape of a sail.

5 The steps of printing and cutting may be interchanged should the flat sheet already be cut into the shape of a sail. That is, the step of printing the informational content onto the flat sheet can be done after the sheet has been cut into the shape of a sail or portion thereof. Thereafter, grommets, reefing lines, etc. can be attached.

10 The invention will be best understood in connection with the accompanying drawings and from a consideration of the following detailed description in which corresponding parts are indicated by corresponding numerals.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

15 FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a sailing vessel employing sails in accordance with the instant invention.

FIG. 2 is a head-on elevational view of the sailing vessel under conditions where there is no wind loading.

FIG. 3 is a head-on elevational view of the sailing vessel under wind loading.

FIG. 4 is a top plan view of the vessel under the conditions shown in Figure 2.

20 FIG. 5 is a top plan view of the vessel under the conditions shown in Figure 3.

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of an exemplary apparatus used to print informational

content upon the sail material.

FIG. 7 is a partially exploded view of the preferred embodiment of the sail material adapted for use with the invention.

DESCRIPTION OF A PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

The invention is directed to a sailboat sail apparatus and method for manufacturing thereof. Figures 1 through 5 depict such a sail apparatus employed on a typical sailing vessel. Figures 2 and 4 show the vessel 20 under zero wind load such that the sail material of headsail 30 and mainsail 40 are not exposed to wind loading and, consequently, in accordance with the invention lie essentially flat. Figures 1, 3 and 5 show vessel 20, headsail 30 and mainsail 40 exposed to wind loading such that headsail 30 is stretched to assume draft d_1 and mainsail 40 assumes draft d_2 . As a result of sails 30 and 40 being stretchable into the configuration shown, they form airfoils such that vessel 20 is driven through the water as a result of the aerodynamic lift forces F exerted upon the sails.

Figure 6 shows a step in the process of printing informational material upon a flat sheet of material 50 which includes a conveyor platform 70 upon which sheet 50 is laid in planar fashion. Essentially, all points of sheet 50 are in contact with conveyor platform 70. A printing apparatus 80, which may be one of many known in the art, is used to impart the informational material onto sheet 50 via any known printing method. The informational material may be imprinted on one side of sheet 50 or both sides. Alternatively, different informational content may be placed on either side of sheet 50.

The sheet 50 shown in Figure 6 is already cut into the shape of a sail such as mainsail 40. As

an alternative, flat rectangular sheets of material 50 may be employed and later cut into the shape of sails or portions of sails. In the case where such material is cut into the shapes of portions of sails, those portions can be joined together to form a larger, complete, sail in cases where the printing apparatus 80 cannot accommodate the entire sail plan for a particular sail. Or, since the type of material which may be utilized for the sail of the instant invention is typically manufactured in rectangular sheets, such sheets can be printed upon in a rectangular sheet and later cut into the shape of an entire sail in the event that printing apparatus 80 can accommodate sheets of sufficient size.

The method of the instant invention, in its preferred form, comprises providing a flat sheet of the material taken from the group consisting of stretchable sheet material which can be laid flat upon a planar surface for printing but which can stretch into the draft shape of a common sailboat sail to create aerodynamic lift to drive the sailboat; printing on one or both sides of said sheet; and assembling a plurality of such sheets into a sail or cutting said sheet into the shape of a sail.

Alternatively, the planar sheet of sail material may be pre-cut into the shape of the sail or portion of a sail and thereafter printed upon.

In addition, various fittings and other hardware may be affixed to or associated with any one of sails 30, 40, 50, etc. as will occur to those skilled in the field.

EXAMPLE:

A sail in accordance with the instant invention was manufactured using 15/16 laminated banner vinyl supplied by Value Vinyls, Inc. of Arlington, Texas. The weight of the material is approximately 15/16 ounces per square yard, and is provided in standard widths of either 36 inches,

54 inches or 72 inches. The preferred material, which is shown in exploded detail in Figure 7, preferably comprises at least two sheets of PVC vinyl 52, 53 sandwiching a scrim 54 of crosshatched polyester yarn of approximately 9 x 9 count per square inch and a denier of 1,000. The grab tensile strength of the material at breaking point is 218 pounds per inch in one direction and 195 pounds per inch in a perpendicular direction. The tongue tear, or point of rupture after puncture when a 90 degree pull is exerted thereupon, is 70 pounds in one direction and 66 pounds in a perpendicular direction. The adhesion strength of the multiple layers of vinyl laminate is 20 pounds per each two inches of length, which is the amount of force required to separate the layers 52, 53 from one another. A matte finish was provided to the material prior to printing. Also, preferably but not by way of limitation, an opaque light barrier sheet may be employed such as sheet 55 to prevent light from passing through the sail.

The sail of the preferred embodiment is comprised of a material which lays flat at substantially all points when not exposed to wind loading but which assumes an airfoil shape with corresponding sail draft d_1 , d_2 , etc. when mounted to a sailing vessel in any known manner and exposed to wind loading. The sail as described further includes informational matter L thereupon, such as textual informational matter, images, or any combination thereof. The sail is ideally suited for advertisement when utilized on near-shore sailing vessels.

As an example but not by way of limitation, headsail 30 is connected at its forward edge to forestay 32, at its head end 36 to a halyard which is reciprocally movable up and down mast 42. A jib sheet 34 is connected to clew 35 of headsail 30 to control the profile thereof under wind loading. Mast 42 also supports the leading edge or "luff" of mainsail 40, the head 46 thereof being attached to

a mainsail halyard 47 and the clew 45 thereof being connected to boom 44.

The instant invention has been disclosed in its most and practical and preferred embodiment.

However, the invention is not restricted to the illustrative examples described above and illustrated in the drawings, but may be modified within the scope of the following claims without departing

5 from the intended scope of the invention. The material is preferably opaque such that matter printed on one side will not show through to the other. This facilitates printing of independent matter of either side of the sheet.